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SIX ORATIONS
OF PAUL

INTRODUCTION AND
COMMENTS ON TEXT

By E. P. CLARKE

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SIX ORATIONS OF PAUL

Introduction and Comments on Text

By E. P. CLARKE
President of California State
Board of Education

Six Orations of Paul

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By E. P. Clarke

*President of California State
Board of Education*



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FOREWORD

We study the orations of Cicero, why not the orations of Paul?

Perhaps one answer to this question is the fact that even among leaders of the Christian church there has been little recognition of the fact that Paul is one of the great orators of history.

The church has made full acknowledgment of the greatness of Paul in other respects. He stands out in history as preeminently the missionary to the Gentiles; he was an efficient organizer; he ranks very high as a theologian; he was a versatile linguist for he spoke and wrote Hebrew, Latin and Greek with equal facility; he was an intrepid hero of the faith; and finally a martyr for the truth. Paul was all these and more but in addition he is entitled to a place of leadership as an orator;

and that conclusion is based both on the subject matter of his addresses and on their effect on those who heard them.

There has come down to us a tradition of Paul as a "little hooknosed Jew", inferior in appearance and humble and almost apologetic in manner. That tradition, however, is not founded on Luke's narrative in the Acts or on Paul's references to himself in his epistles. It is true that he had some form of bodily infirmity, but there is no logic in the conclusion that this was such as to mar his dignity or stamp him with any appearance of inferiority. We want to remember that early in his ministry, the people of Lystra were ready to worship Paul as Mercury, the god of eloquence. That was a tribute both to his oratory and to his personal appearance, for we know that Mercury in the conception of the time was the ideal of grace and beauty.

We do well to recall the fact that Paul charmed the critical Athenians with his address on Mar's Hill; that by the force of his eloquence he compelled the Jewish mob that thirsted for his blood to listen to him while he vindicated his position as a leader in the Christian faith; that he made a profound impression before the court of Agrippa; and that he stirred the city of Rome during the years there when he "preached the kingdom of God with all confidence".

A review of the epistles of Paul shows scores of passages that are strictly oratorical in character. The habit of the orator was so strong upon Paul that even in his letters, he breaks forth in matchless, sonorous bits of oratory.

Take these as examples:

Romans 8:35, 38-9:

Who shall separate us from the
love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or

distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

First Corinthians 13. The first and last verses are characteristic:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 3: 20-21:

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto

him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

Philippians 3: 13-14:

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3: 11:

Where there is neither Greek, nor Jew, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all and in all.

Second Timothy 4: 6-8:

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

If we are to accept Paul as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, and that, I take it, is still a debatable question, this passage may well be chosen as another illustration.

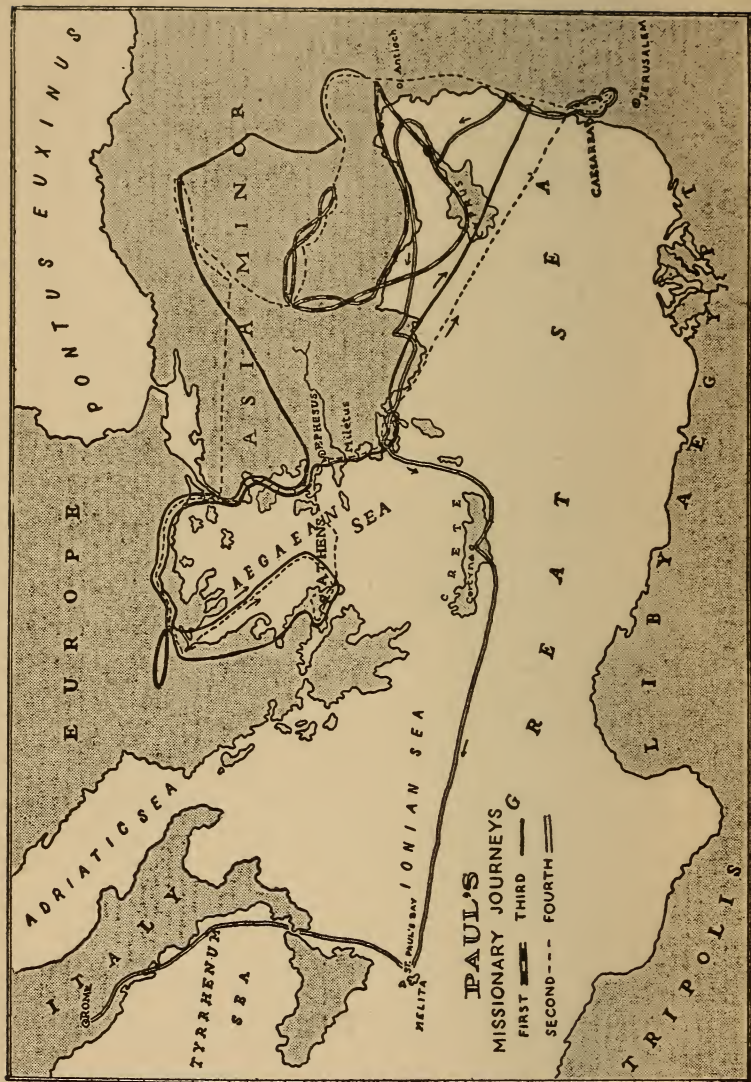
Hebrews 11: 32-34, 12: 1-2:

And shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Paul did not write out his addresses; and his friend and companion, Luke, did not make stenographic notes of memorable orations he heard Paul give and later transcribe them for the benefit of posterity. Luke, however, was what the modern newspaper man would call a remarkably fine reporter; and he has preserved for us the substance of several addresses of Paul. I have selected six of these as typical of the style of Paul and as worthy of as careful and respectfully study as we bestow on the classics of other great orators of history.



MISSIONARY JOURNEYS OF PAUL

(See Map on Opposite Page)

FIRST JOURNEY: (with Barnabas and Mark) from Antioch (in Syria) to Cypress, Pamphylia, Antioch (in Psidia), Iconium, and Perga and back to Antioch.

SECOND JOURNEY: (with Silas, Timothy and Luke) from Antioch through Cilicia to Troas and thence to Macedonia, visiting Phillipi, Corinth, Athens and Ephesus. Thence returning to Caesarea and Jerusalem and then back to Antioch.

THIRD JOURNEY: (with Luke and Titus) from Antioch to Greese, where the cities in which Paul preached and founded churches in his second journey were revisited. On his return, the apostle stopped at Miletus to bid farewell to the elders of the Ephesian church. He continued his journey to Jerusalem.

FOURTH JOURNEY: As prisoner (with Luke and Aristarchus) from Caesarea by Cypress, Crete, and Malta to Rome.

There is a tradition that after his first imprisonment at Rome Paul made another missionary journey that took him to Spain and some say even to Britain. This, however, is tradition and not biblical record.

PAUL DECLARES JESUS THE MESSIAH

Acts 13: 17-39

INTRODUCTION

It must be admitted that in rhetorical effect, this address is not equal to some others which Luke reports in some detail; but it is of marked interest as the first statement of any length in Paul's own words in defense of the Christian faith. It is a cogent argument moreover to the Jews in support of the Messiahship of Jesus; he says, "We declare unto you glad tidings how that the promise that was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children." Paul also gives strong emphasis to one of the cardinal points in the Christian faith—the resurrection of Jesus, fully attested to by a large group of disciples "who are his witnesses."

This sermon that we can fittingly class as an oration was given at Antioch in Pisidia, to a Jewish audience in a Jewish synagogue. Paul spoke in response to the invitation of the ruler of the synagogue, "Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Then Paul stood up and beckoning with his hand said:

TEXT OF ORATION

Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it.

And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan,

he divided their land to them by lot.

And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

Of this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

Men and Brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

But God raised him from the dead:

And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

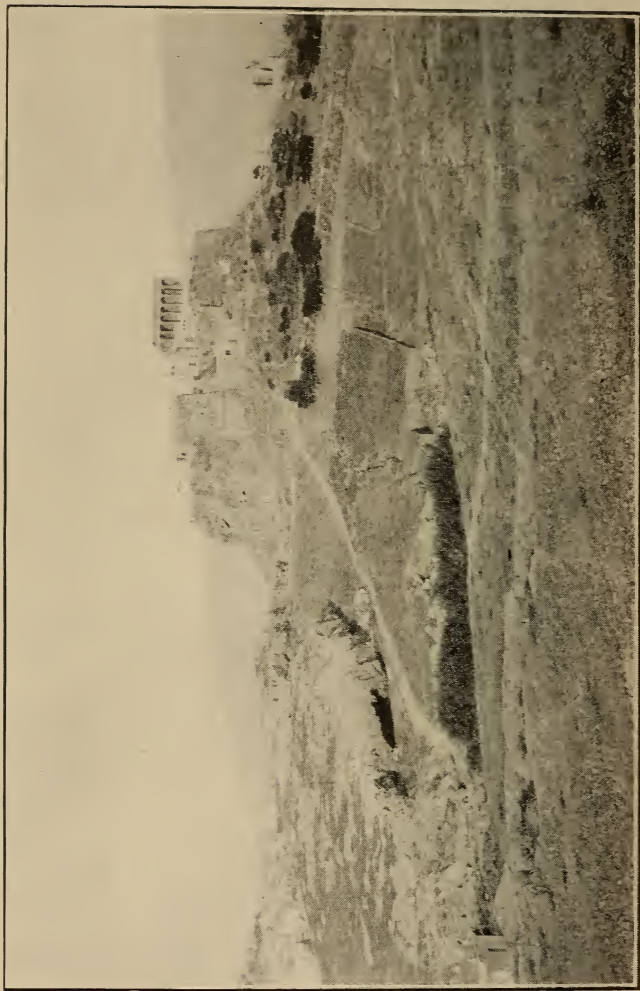
Wherefore he saith also in another psalm. Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

But he whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.



A modern view of Mars Hill and the Acropolis at Athens

See Paul's Oration, page 25

PAUL AT MARS HILL

Acts 17: 22-31

INTRODUCTION

We do not know that they had daily newspapers in Athens at the time of Paul's visit, but there were other forms of effective publicity before the days of newspapers; and it seems quite evident that Paul's arguments in the synagogue of the Jews and in the market place daily with all who would listen to him became well noised abroad through the city. Certain it is that some of the leaders of public opinion, philosophers, teachers and no doubt politicians, thought it would be a fine thing to give him the supreme opportunity that the city afforded to tell about his "strange gods" and so they conducted him to Mars Hill, near the Acropolis, apparently with every mark

of consideration and respect. We may be sure moreover that his appearance on this occasion was well advertised and that he had a highly distinguished audience, many simply curious to "hear some new thing", but others sincerely desirous to know more of the story of the resurrection of Jesus as told by this unknown but eloquent Jew.

What Luke gives us of the oration on Mars Hill is of course only a fragment, but it is a fragment that indicates clearly the greatness of the address. Paul was conciliatory at the outset; he showed his knowledge of Greek literature; he worked up to his climaxes with the grace and skill of the true orator; and he had the noble courage to drive home the lesson of repentance.

Paul's message must have been truly a "new thing" to those critical Athenians; some scoffed; others were indif-

ferent; but a considerable group at least were profoundly stirred. The philosophy of the Christian faith was new then, not merely in Athens but generally throughout the known world. But that philosophy has shaped the course of history and transformed mankind, while most of the fads that seemed so important to the news-eager and disputatious Athenians have long since been forgotten.

TEXT OF ORATION

Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious.

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is

Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth
not in temples made with hands;

Neither is worshiped with men's
hands, as though he needed any-
thing, seeing he giveth to all life,
and breath, and all things;

And hath made of one blood all
nations of men for to dwell on all
the face of the earth, and hath de-
termined the times before appoint-
ed, and the bounds of their habi-
tation;

That they should seek the Lord,
if haply they might feel after him,
and find him, though he be not far
from every one of us:

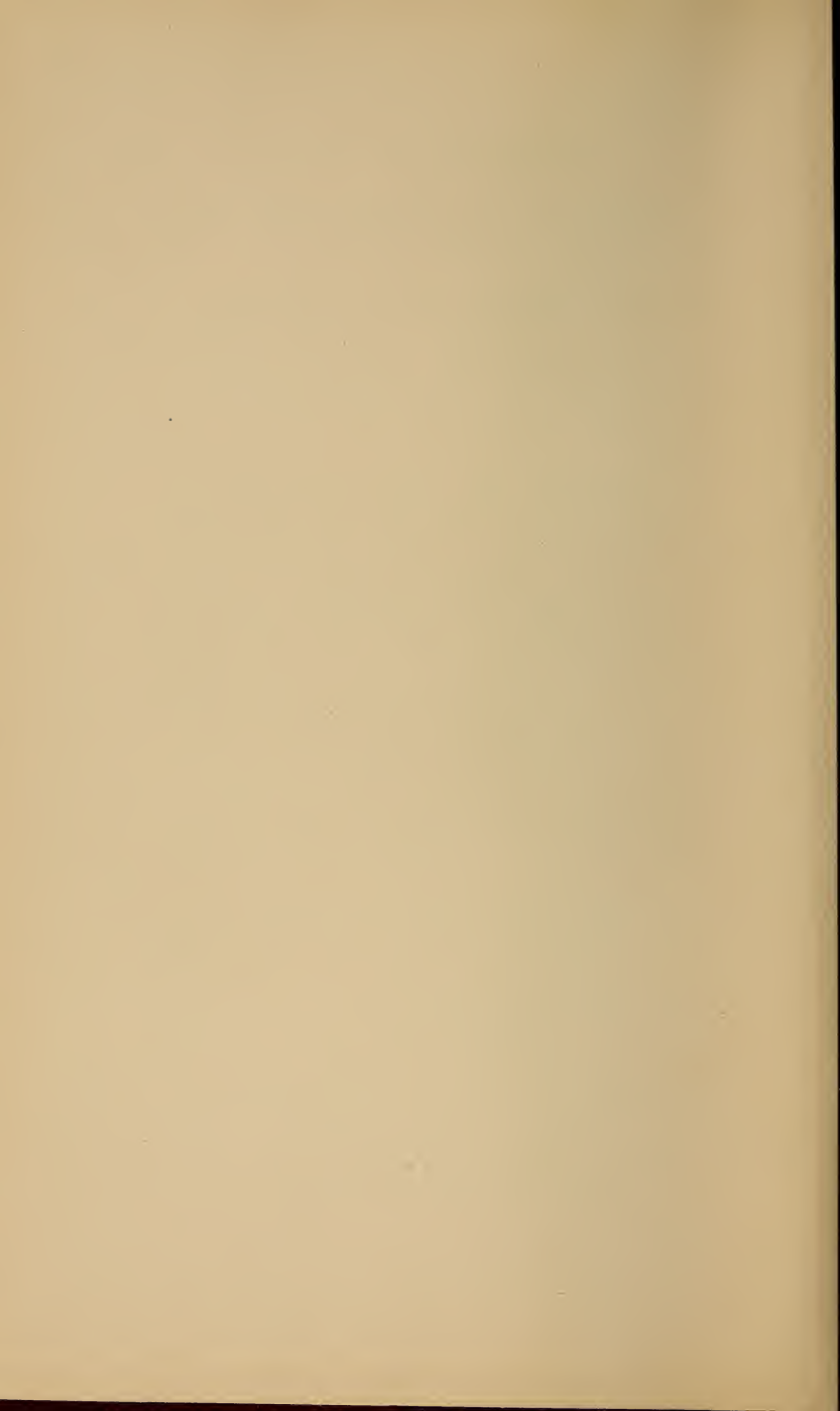
For in him we live, and move,
and have our being; as certain
also of your own poets have said,
For we are also his offspring.

Forasmuch then as we are the
offspring of God, we ought not to
think that the Godhead is like unto

gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and man's device.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.



PAUL'S FAREWELL TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

Acts 20: 18-35

INTRODUCTION

We are apt to think of Paul as a lonely and austere man, without close friends or intimates and without qualities that knit men to him. That, however, is not the proper conception of the character of Paul. We have only to recall his friendship for Luke, Timothy and other coworkers, his affection for the slave Onesimus and his tender farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus on the shore at Miletus to realize that he was a man of tender, loving heart and a devoted pastor. His personal relations to the members of the churches that he founded were like those of a father to his children.

Paul was not much given to talking about himself, but in this message to these friends from Ephesus he opened his heart to them. He showed them how much he loved them and the people from whom they came; he told them how he had given himself unsparingly to the service of the Master; and he plead with them to follow his example and "help the weak", remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, "how he said it is more blessed to give than to receive". No wonder, as Luke tells us in his simple but wonderfully graphic story, that "they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake that they should see his face no more".

That sort of a demonstration was never called out except by a man of winning personality and tender affection.

TEXT OF ORATION

Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

And now, behold I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath

made you overseerers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

PAUL STILLS THE JEWISH MOB

Acts 22: 1-21

INTRODUCTION

Paul's rescue from the Jewish mob at the door of the temple and his address on the steps of the Roman castle make a story of thrilling interest and place the apostle to the Gentiles before us in the light of a great orator and a true hero.

The attack on Paul was entirely without justification. It was started by the lying report that the apostle had taken Gentiles into the inner court of the temple. But the Jewish fanatics were more ready to believe a lie about Paul than the truth and so they fell upon him and would have torn him in pieces but for the timely intervention of the Roman soldiers. They drove back the

bloodthirsty Jews, dragged Paul away from them and started to take him up into the castle.

One might think that Paul would have been very glad to escape and that he would have lost no time in getting safely behind the brazen doors of the castle, against which the howling dervishes who were after him might beat in vain. But Paul was not that sort of a man. He had faced mobs before; he had been stoned and dragged out of cities as dead; he had fought with wild beasts in the arena at Ephesus; and he was not afraid of these Jews. He had a message for them and he proposed to deliver it then and there. The Roman eagles were at his back, symbols of an authority that the Jews hated but nevertheless feared. And speaking in Greek to the captain, he asked permission to address the men who were howling for his life. And when permission was granted, he wiped the dust

and blood from his face, stretched forth his hand, stilled the mob, and then, speaking in Hebrew, he began his defense. It is a magnificent picture of courage and power.

TEXT OF ORATION

Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate

of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there.

Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was

standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

PAUL BEFORE FELIX

Acts 24: 10-21

INTRODUCTION

Paul made two notable defenses before the Roman authorities, once before Felix and later before Agrippa. Luke gives us a more complete report of the oration before Agrippa, but the appearance before Felix presents Paul to us as a remarkable pleader, a tactful and conciliatory speaker and an able champion of the vital truths of Christianity.

The Jewish accusers of Paul did not appear in person on the occasion of the hearing before Felix, but they hired "a certain orator, named Tertullus" to represent them. Tertullus was no doubt a Roman and we should call him a jury lawyer. He started in by handing out

a lot of flattery to Felix and then indulged in a rather skillful review of the charges against Paul that the Jewish priests had loaded him up with.

When Paul came to speak, he did not imitate the gross flattery of Tertullus, but he did establish friendly relations with the court by a few well-chosen words of compliment. Then he opened up on Tertullus and he certainly made that hired pleader look very small. There was a dignity and power about what he said in answer to the charges of the Jews that must have commanded instant and respectful attention.

TEXT OF ORATION

Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city.

Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me.

Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council.

Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE
AGRIPPA

Acts 26: 2-29

INTRODUCTION

The Romans dearly loved a show; and Paul's defense before Agrippa was made a notable occasion in the Roman court at Caesarea. Luke says that they gathered "with great pomp", and that beside Festus, Agrippa and his sister Bernice—famous alike for her beauty and dissoluteness—the "chief captains and principal men" of the city were present.

This distinguished company, however, was to be treated to something more than a spectacle. They had heard no doubt of the fame of Paul as an orator; and this fashionable audience expected to witness a fine exhibition

of eloquence. In this they were not disappointed; they found that the man who disputed on Mars Hill, who awed the mob on the castle steps at Jerusalem and discomfited Tertullus before Felix had in his two years in prison lost none of his winning grace, manly dignity and moral power. They were not prepared, however, for the searching personal appeal he made to their consciences, and that after all is the highest test of oratory. These people who had come together to make a show of Paul's oratory were glad when they could close the hearing and escape from his "words of truth and soberness", lest more than one might be "almost persuaded".

There were many dramatic incidents in the life of Paul, but none more so than the closing appeal in this noble oration. The climax fairly burns itself into the memory; no jesture of eloquence could have been more effective

than when the apostle lifted his manacled hands and said, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds".

TEXT OF ORATION

I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that

after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made to God unto our fathers:

Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea,

and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

(And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

But he said,)

I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

(Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

And Paul said,)

I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.



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